

From: "John A. Shuford" <john@teamcrs.org>
To: "Toby Laverty" <ttlaverty@gmail.com>,
Subject: AVP and Trauma
Date: Sun, 21 Aug 2011 11:07:34 -0400

Toby,

You raise some good questions, some of which we have been looking at.

We have yet to do a Trauma Healing workshop in prison, so we do not yet know what the implications are. We hope to do one before the IG, so we can discuss it there, but we are not sure yet.

The structure of the Trauma Healing workshop process is no different than any other specialized workshop. You must first take the Basic, Advanced, Training of Facilitators, Bias Awareness, Manly Awareness, Anger and Forgiveness, etc. workshops before you can facilitate them. The Trauma Healing workshop is no different on that account.

Every local has its version of each workshop. We do not dictate what the design and content is to be [other than the inclusion of TP and role plays]. The fact that different Trauma Healing workshop models have been developed in different parts of the world is not a problem, but a strength of AVP. AVP does not support any specific workshop design within the US, much less around the world.

The real issue for me is how close are we coming to therapy and what are the potential consequences of what we are trying to do. I don't believe there is any question that what we are trying to do with the Trauma Healing workshop is important, valuable and ground breaking. But is it AVP and are we going too far for other facilitators to utilize it?

We do not have the answers to these questions, but will hopefully find out as we move forward. We are not publicizing the Trauma Healing workshop for everybody to use. We are testing it just as Masks and other intense exercises had to be tested before they could be put out for everyone to use. We will be doing our first Trauma Healing workshop in the Delaware women's prison under very special conditions. We may find out that we do not need these special conditions as we move forward, but we simply do not know at this point and we want to be careful. We have an experienced trauma therapist as a co-facilitator and I have a mental health therapy background, although I have not done direct therapy in over 20 years. We also have follow-up arrangements with the mental health provider at the prison and a trauma therapy center that provides trauma therapy education in the prison.

Clearly, other programs will not have these resources. We may find that none or some or all of these resources are necessary. Let me make note here that we are definitely not doing traditional therapy in the sense that we focus on healing a specific trauma. We are providing tools and experiences

which will allow participants to work on a piece of a trauma so that they can change the impact of that trauma. The trauma will still be there, but its impact will be mitigated so they can function at a higher level or at least without the impact of the trauma impacting their daily life so greatly. We use the traumatic event in a similar way we use a conflict situation as an example for using TP and to learn how to use TP in conflict situations. We are not digging up buried traumas, but situations the participants are well aware of and probably have talked about already in other AVP workshops.

Our concern is that the topic is trauma and trauma education and within that context, talking about a specific trauma may trigger intense reactions, more so than within a non-Trauma Healing workshop. We all have seen intense reactions from participants, but it has not been within the context of a trauma focused workshop. We may see the same level of reaction in the Trauma Healing workshop and we may not. We do not know, so we are being very cautious until we see what happens. Our hope is that we can design the workshop and the preparation for the workshop in a way that other facilitators can use. If not, then it is either not AVP or a specialized case for AVP. We do not, I feel, presently have enough experience or information to make that decision.

Concerning the general topic of Trauma and AVP: in the paper I recently wrote on Trauma and AVP, I make the point that AVP in general is healing to trauma [or the impact of unresolved trauma]. This is one of the reasons AVP has been so effective in facilitating change in participants; it has addressed the cause of much of the problem behavior people experience, rather than focus on the symptoms. We did not realize this until recently; we just knew it was effective. The relationship of AVP to trauma healing is significant, even though we do not directly address the participants' trauma in the Basic and Advanced, just like we do not directly address the crimes which got participants into prison. I also believe this relationship will be important for us to openly state as we move forward with AVP in prisons and in other settings. If we can get prisons to focus on trauma as a contributing cause of drug addiction, mental health problems and criminal behavior, we will have hugely impacted the criminal justice system. To focus on "what happened to you" rather than "what did you do?" But, to be sure, we still haven't answered the question if Trauma Healing workshops are part of AVP and is it the role of AVP to carry this message forward.

I fully support having a discussion on this important issue and I thank you Toby for raising it.

In AVPeace and Service,

John

John A. Shuford

-----Original Message-----

From: Toby Laverty [<mailto:tlaverty@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, August 18, 2011 10:10 PM
To: AVP/USA Committee of Committees
Subject: Re: Email Lists

Roger,

I am concerned that we are making some fundamental changes in the structure of AVP without any discussion. I might have missed the discussions in recent years and if I have I'd love to be caught up. As I see AVP we are a non-professional organization that empowers others like us to walk through AVP (conflict resolution) together. Our fundamental basic, advanced and the T4F workshop structure has been working for nearly 40 years now... are we up for changing that?

I have heard that anyone who facilitates these workshops need to have been taken the Trauma workshop. An additional "certification"... that's feels to me like a fundamental change. Are we creating a class of "professional" facilitators? Paid facilitators?

There seems to be several different 'varieties' of Trauma workshops?? Do we support all of them? Are we choosing one over the others? The distribution center is presently selling a privately produced "manual" ... have we discussed that? Is it going to be 'required' to purchase by our volunteers?

Is it appropriate to begin this type of work in institutions that have NO (or very little) mental health support for those inside? As well as those on the outside with no resources for mental health assistance.

In every workshop that I have ever done... the Intro. talk presents very seriously how we do NOT do therapy... are we edging over that line?

I do have the sense that the creation of these workshops is coming from compassion, but I am concerned. The next National Gathering is interested in making this the theme.... now a list serve for this. If this discussion has been held I would like to go back and read minutes and/or any other information that could help me catch up.

Sincerely,

Toby